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Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children

Letter dated 7 June 2001 from the Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In preparation for the special session of the General Assembly on children, the Governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Germany hosted a regional conference which took place in Berlin from 16 to 18 May 2001. I have the honour to bring to your attention the report of the Conference on Children in Europe and Central Asia. It contains the Berlin Commitment for Children of Europe and Central Asia, which was adopted by the 52 participating countries and is the substantive outcome of the six working groups that met within the framework of the Conference.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and the report of the Berlin Conference (see annex) circulated as a document of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children at its third substantive session.

(*Signed*) Hanns Heinrich **Schumacher**
Ambassador
Deputy Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 7 June 2001 from the Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

CONFERENCE ON CHILDREN IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

PREPARING FOR THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY SPECIAL SESSION ON CHILDREN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Inter-Governmental Conference on "Children in Europe and Central Asia" (Berlin, May 16-18, 2001) brought 52 governments together for the first time to review the situation of children in the region and identify major priorities for the coming decade. Its main outcome was the **Berlin Commitment** - a statement of principles and commitment to action, strongly based on children's rights, and one that all participating governments have endorsed. The Berlin Commitment forms the basis of Europe and Central Asia's inputs into the Special Session on Children of the United Nations General Assembly in September, 2001.

The Conference was hosted jointly by the governments of Germany and Bosnia and Herzegovina and preceded by three important consultations. The first at Bucharest with civil society organisations; the second at Budapest with young people; and a third at Minsk with governments of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

The 3 days of discussions were opened by the Foreign Ministers of Germany, Mr. Joschka Fischer, and of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dr Zlatko Lagumdzija. Together with the German Federal Minister of Family Affairs and Youth, Ms Christine Bergmann, UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy and 3 delegates of the Budapest Consultation of Young People, they set out the challenges facing an agenda towards realising child rights in Europe and Central Asia. The opening session was also given context by the results of the first ever opinion poll of the views of young people in 35 countries on a range of child rights related issues in the region.

A review of progress during the 1990s on the Goals of the World Summit for Children highlighted both contrasted trends and yet increasingly shared challenges across the region. In Western Europe, many of the urgent global development goals for children have been achieved. Yet if data are disaggregated, important lacunae are evident, especially for minorities and disadvantaged groups. A new set of emerging challenges confronts this part of the region focusing on child protection, including violence, and the needs of adolescents and young people. In the Eastern and Central Europe, the CIS and the Baltic States region, the decade has been dominated by the effects of transition and the profound economic and social changes that accompanied it. Progress continued to take place in some key indicators for children, especially infant and child health and mortality. In general, however, many of the achievements for children have been under threat. The scale of these changes – and the need to protect children from the impact of economic and social crisis - have set new and complex challenges. Opportunities for reform in key areas important for children - including the large numbers of children living in institutions – have presented themselves along with a rising set of concerns centering on young people and the impact of transition on this vulnerable age group.

A number of key themes ran through the Conference. In both parts of the region, the rise and persistence of child poverty is a major concern, calling for strategies that address structural issues and bring together economic and social policy more effectively. Child poverty was seen as the 'greatest obstacle' to the realisation of child rights in the region.

With ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) by all countries in the region, the focus was increasingly on implementation. Exclusion remains a reality for many children in both the established industrialised and transition countries. Children of ethnic minorities, Roma, children with disabilities, refugee children, all share in experiencing discrimination and deprivation. Despite many of the legal and policy frameworks being in place, the reinforcing nature of barriers to access to services for some groups (especially in education), the absence of protection and the rise of exploitation, violence and abuse of children sets out a major agenda to be addressed.

Children's and young people's participation was seen as a particular challenge for the region. Both on account of the shift in attitudes and institutions required to make participation meaningful - but also as a 'formidable opportunity' that the engagement of young people and their resourcefulness represents and can contribute to the building of society. Participation was seen as an area where the region has both rich potential as well as a special responsibility to take a lead. Young people participated actively in the Berlin Conference in ways that have not often been seen in inter-governmental meetings, pointing to what is possible if the processes adopted encourage and make such participation substantive.

A fourth area that emerged as a clear and major challenge was the cluster of risks and threats that increasingly surround adolescence and growing up. Alcohol, tobacco, the rise of substance abuse, HIV /AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections are closely connected. The limited scale of effective strategies in this area – at a time when an epidemic of HIV/AIDS is rapidly rising in parts of the region and other threats of tobacco, alcohol and drugs are also rising – called for high political priority to be given to young peoples' health and the adoption of strategies that are multi-sectoral in nature. The need for some difficult decisions by governments was emphasised.

A final special feature of the Conference was the exploration of a key link between the rights of children today and those of future generations. Inter-generational justice has not featured widely in discussions on children's rights. The protection of the environment, - or the way its lack of protection has a crucial impact on the lives of future generations of children was examined as one among many areas where such ideas have important application. The discussion emphasised the need to develop ways to assess the future impact of key decisions taken today, and prevent irreversible damage to the rights of future children.

There was a strong sense throughout the meeting that there was much experience to be shared across and within the region. This included economic and social policy, child protection, education and health but also in new areas including participation of young people and applications of new technologies. It was also clear that there are important agendas of reform still to be realised, often requiring the active involvement or leadership of civil society. A number of issues require inter-country action.

Six Working Groups were formed to identify major issues and actions needed on themes emerging from the Berlin Commitment. Their major recommendations include:

(1) On **Child Protection**, addressing discrimination and social exclusion, exploitation and violence, new strategies need to be evolved that ensure access to services, participation, and protection in an overlapping and supportive way. Affirmative action is required to

- actively promote social policies to reduce poverty and inequality as causes of discrimination and exclusion
- reform child care systems to ensure the right of children to grow up in a family environment
- take up a national declaration of 'zero tolerance' for sexual abuse & exploitation of children
- ensure ratification by all governments of the two optional protocols to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict as well as on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography

(2) On **Child Poverty, Transition and Development** : identified poverty as the prime obstacle to the fulfilment of children's rights, calling for strategies that are multi-dimensional and which address the specific facets of child poverty. Actions should be taken to

- adopt 'relative child poverty' as a common measure of deprivation in countries across the region and as an indicator of national commitment to children
- formulate a joint action programme against child poverty in the Europe and Central Asia region - one that has elimination of child poverty as a declared and time bound goal
- ensure that children receive a fair share of national resources in good times as well as bad

(3) On **Health and Social Development,** strategies are needed to simultaneously address an 'unfinished agenda' of child survival as well as new challenges, in particular ensuring that young people's health becomes a major priority for governments. Specifically, action is needed to

- renew HIV prevention efforts among highly vulnerable groups in Western Europe, especially self-identified gay men and injecting drug users
- measures to urgently address the rapidly rising HIV epidemic in the CEE/CIS and Baltic States through strategies that raise coverage of interventions among injecting drug users and effectively reach out to all young people
- make 'the healthy choice, the easy choice' for young people by bans or severe restrictions on advertising and sponsorship by tobacco and alcohol companies
- intensify strategies on new born care and promotion of 'exclusive breastfeeding'
- launch and sustain comprehensive programmes against iodine deficiency and anaemia.

(4) On **Participation,** recognising that across the region, children remain systematically excluded from decision-making that affect their lives, and yet that their participation often leads to improved quality of decisions and interventions, called for

- all schools to introduce meaningful democratic decision-making structures that enable children to participate in all aspects of school life
- mechanisms to be established at national and local level through which children's views can be heard
- training for all professionals working with children in the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- establishing statutorily independent children's rights Ombudspersons

(5) On **Intergenerational Justice and the Environment,** taking into account the need to respect and protect the rights of future, unborn, generations of children, there should be

- greater complementarity in applying the principles of Agenda 21, the Aarhus Convention and the CRC
- promotion of a more child-centred and multi-disciplinary approach to environmental and intergenerational issues
- long term impact studies on developments that threaten the well-being and rights of future children (including the environmental disasters of Chernobyl, the Aral Sea, post-conflict areas of the Balkans etc), and extend the liability period for environmental damage in international conventions

(6) On **Education,** taking into account the importance of schooling in children's lives, and the potential realisation of other supportive social goals through the education system, there should be

- appropriate funding levels ensured for the education sector
- greater use of dis-aggregated data to monitor achievement and attendance rates of disadvantaged groups
- expansion of child-centred and participatory approaches to teaching
- support to reform of national and school based curricula that allow young people to protect themselves against new challenges that affect their lives.
- initiatives that address the needs of children from minority groups or disadvantaged, actively involving parents and the community
- increased resources for expansion of information technologies in schools and promotion of distance learning

In the final session of the Conference, the Berlin Commitment was adopted by consensus. The session also included perspectives by individual Special Representatives to the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children, emphasising the positive process leading up to and during the Berlin Conference. In closing the Conference, the Chairperson noted that a number of Governments had requested that the process begun in Berlin should form the basis of a continued dialogue. In response to this request, the co-hosts of the Conference, Germany and Bosnia and Herzegovina, agreed to consult with participant governments, UNICEF and other international organisations present, to facilitate that process.

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BACKGROUND TO THE CONFERENCE AND OVERVIEW

The Berlin Conference brought together 52 countries of Europe and Central Asia in a unique meeting as part of the preparations for the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children due to take place in September, 2001. Hosted jointly by the Governments of Germany and Bosnia and Herzegovina, this gathering of countries met for the first time to share lessons learned on improving the lives of children and young people, and discuss a common agenda for children in the region for the coming decade. Its goals were to agree upon priorities for children in Europe and Central Asia and provide a regional perspective into the global process that culminates later in the year at the Special Session on Children at the United Nations in New York.

The Conference was preceded by three major consultations. The first, in Bucharest (April 8 –10, 2001), of representatives of civil society, NGOs and community based organisations discussed and agreed upon priorities that should shape the agenda for children in the region and the issues/roles that were important from their vantage point. The second, taking place in Budapest (April 23-29, 2001), engaged young people from 25 countries of the region to chalk out how young people saw Europe and the region and 'how they dreamed it should be'. A third consultation, taking place in Minsk (26-27 April, 2001) developed a set of recommendations to improve the development and participation of children in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries. Delegates from Bucharest, Budapest and Minsk joined the Berlin meeting with young people particularly present in the discussions in all sessions.

The Berlin meeting itself began, after the Opening Session, with a review of the situation of children in the decade since the World Summit for Children in 1990. The World Summit for Children was among the first of the world meetings to set global goals that were time-bound and measurable. The Berlin Conference was, then, an opportunity to review progress in the region, identify where achievements had been made, where gaps remained (or where earlier achievements were under threat), and set out new challenges facing children and young people. It was clear that while many of the goals were achieved at national level, the lack of disaggregated data, (by ethnic group or minority) concealed a number of important lacunae, and that for many such developed countries, new sets of indicators of progress against problems faced in the region need to be evolved and widely adopted.

The meeting in Berlin was special in many ways. Four in particular stand out. The first was concern at the scale and persistence of child poverty in the region. There was an acknowledgement that child poverty was a cross-cutting issue and one that has to be faced under very different economic and social conditions. Also that important experiences of child poverty reduction were available in countries in the region. The clear message from the Conference was that child poverty is a major obstacle to the fulfilment of children's rights on both sides of Europe and Central Asia. And that it can be eliminated from the region if there is political will to do so. The idea of developing a European and Central Asia-wide initiative on child poverty was born. Many participant countries expressed the wish to continue this important dialogue.

A second major theme of the Berlin Conference centred on progress in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Since 1990, all countries in the region have ratified the Convention and a number have taken measures to incorporate the principles into their national legislation. While many of the initial objectives of access to basic services (in education, child health and nutrition, etc) have been achieved in the region, Reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child point to areas where major concerns remain. Social exclusion is still a reality for certain minorities and for a growing number of young people even in the most wealthy countries. Old forms of exclusion in transition countries persist and in some settings have been exacerbated by continued adverse economic conditions. Strategies are needed that can tackle the structural and systemic problems which allow and reinforce such marginalisation. The need for affirmative action and anti-discrimination policy emerged as a strong outcome of the Conference. New norms and attitudes towards children as subjects of rights need to be established and fostered. Indeed, in taking the principles of the Convention seriously, it was observed that no country in the region could be complacent as to the situation of their children.

A third major theme of the Conference was a new and shared determination to make young people's participation a reality in the region. This came partly out of recognition of the vulnerability of young people to many of the adverse developments of recent economic and social change and of young people's health and well-being as a special priority for Europe and Central Asia. The challenge was seen as one of not only addressing the major concerns that affect young people (unemployment, exclusion, the rise in teenage pregnancies, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual health and the continuing threat of HIV/AIDS), but also in terms of their participation. What emerged from the Berlin Conference was a commitment to open the spaces and build capacities for meaningful participation of young people at all levels. Building on the outcomes of the

Budapest meeting of Young People came a re-affirmation of young people's energy, openness and willingness to work with governments, civil society organisations and parents to build a better society. Making this a reality becomes one of the greatest challenges for the region.

A fourth theme broke new ground in linking the three concepts of justice between generations, environmental sustainability and the rights of children. Efforts towards linking children issues with Agenda 21 of the Rio Conference have been underway for some time. But the idea of looking at the environment from the perspective of inter-generational justice – the obligation to leave behind a world that is better or at least as good as the one we inherit - and understanding what this means in terms of protecting the rights of future, as yet unborn, children opened a number of new horizons. The need to ensure that options are kept open for future generations and transmitting social values and institutions that are non-discriminatory and protective of the rights of children, was found to have profound implications.

A last less explicit theme, but one that marked the Conference in almost every session, was the impact that armed conflict has on the lives of young people and children in the region. The conflicts have destroyed community structures and many of the services which children depended upon. But even more devastating has been the impact on social cohesion, creating situations that are often violent and polarising. The vital importance of addressing the root causes of conflict, including poverty and exclusion to prevent a further spiralling of distrust and violence was marked as a key task for the region. The promotion of tolerance and encouraging the recognition of the rights of others emerged as crucial elements of conflict prevention as well as for re-building affected communities.

The work of the Conference was carried out in Plenary and working groups sessions. In the Opening Plenary, the ground was set by a series of keynote speakers, including presentation of the results of the first ever Europe-wide Youth Poll. The Berlin Commitment provided the context for choice of the themes taken up in six Working Groups: on Child Protection; on Child Poverty, Transition and Development Approaches; on Participation; on Health and Social Environment; on Intergenerational Justice and Environmental Sustainability; and on Education. The Berlin Commitment was adopted by consensus. A final session of the Conference looked ahead to the Special Session on Children at the United Nations in September 2001 with views of many 'Special Representatives' of countries on both the Conference outcomes and perspectives for the future.

The Conference's success had much to do with a sense of new and important partnerships taking shape. Partnerships between Governments across the region; between governments, civil society organisations and young people; partnerships between each of these with international organisations. Some of these are new, still finding their appropriate shape and form and need supportive mechanisms to facilitate their effectiveness. Others are more traditional but need new impetus and determination to break down old barriers. Ensuring that these partnerships are kept up and built upon was a further commitment made and challenge at Berlin.

Behind the discussions of priorities for children across the region, there was also a question of resources. In many of the countries at the Conference, fulfilment of children's rights is clearly a question of how great a political priority is given to children in 'good times as well as bad'. In terms of solidarity with countries facing continuing constraints of resource availability, there was a concern that the high-income countries in the region, with a very few honourable exceptions, are not making progress towards the internationally accepted goal of 0.7% of GNP available for ODA. Without progress on this key goal, the achievement of other targets was considered vulnerable to default. Strategies to move ahead on this key responsibility for the region need to remain firmly on the agenda.

Finally it was clear that strategies to realise child rights in the region would need action in all of these areas, and that the development of a coordinated approach which pays attention to the interrelatedness of the issues was as important as specific actions in the respective areas. Such an integrated approach could become the agenda for follow-up to Berlin.

SITUATION OF CHILDREN IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA[1]

One of the most important changes that has been seen over the last decade is the growing recognition that even in a region that is amongst the most prosperous countries in the world, there is need for introspection on the situation of children, and that goals need to be set to improve their conditions. Despite experiencing very different economic trends in the last decade, the two regions share in having achieved many of the most urgent child survival and development goals set in the 1990 World Summit for Children. They also share in facing new sets of challenges that centre on child protection and on young people growing up in a world of greater risks and much greater autonomy. Indicators to capture these new challenges and monitor progress are still to be fully developed and refined.

WESTERN EUROPE

Mr. Stephen Woodhouse, UNICEF Regional Director for Europe summarised trends in the situation of children in Western Europe during the 1990s. The End Decade Reports received so far cover 98% of children in Western Europe. Most countries have achieved many of the individual goals of the World Summit. He noted that few reports, however, provided dis-aggregated data and that disparities between groups, and especially those affecting marginalised groups, remain hidden. Yet it is known that such disparities both exist and are important reflections of the situation of the least advantaged sections of society.

In **child health**, most countries achieved the reductions in mortality set by the World Summit and maintained high levels of protective immunisations. What none of the reports referred to was **child injuries,** now the leading cause of death among 1-14 year olds. Between 1991-1995, 25,000 children died of injuries in Western Europe. If all countries had the level of injuries occurring in Sweden, this could have been reduced by 8,500 deaths. **Adolescent health** has emerged as a major concern for many countries - clustering around related areas of teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, violence, and suicide. These are all closely linked to inadequate self-esteem, and the growing rise in wider problems of substance and alcohol abuse among young people. While teenage births have declined in the region, there is considerable variation across countries with a number of countries still with high levels.

[1] Further details of progress in each of the two regions is included in the 'World Summit for Children End Decade Reports' for each region respectively.

Children born to teenage parents are much more likely to grow up in poverty and become teenage parents themselves, thereby perpetuating a further cycle of deprivation. Yet inclusion of sex education in curricula continues to encounter difficulties.

Access to **early child development** continues to improve with a number of countries achieving over 90% coverage of this important age group. The question of optimal care and stimulation of young children, especially when both adults are working, has, however, been identified as a growing concern in a number of countries. Enrolment rates for **compulsory education** remain very high with major educational issues facing countries relating to the quality of schooling and its relevance, and dealing with drop out and bullying. Children from marginalised populations tend to be over-represented in such groups.

Perhaps of greatest concern has been the rise in and continued high levels of **child poverty** across the region. There is considerable variation in numbers of children in 'relative poverty' with some relatively rich countries having exceptionally high levels of child poverty to tackle. Children in single parent households are a high percentage of these numbers. Poverty denies both parents and children their rights in life. **Violence against children** – a widespread though still hidden phenomenon - has been reflected in increased reports of child sexual abuse, with the public increasingly supportive of action and legislative change. **Corporal punishment**, **pornography**, **adoption of extraterritoriality provisions** to deal with nationals who offend abroad are all subjects of concern across the region, with much still to be done in each of these areas to make legal provisions protecting children's rights a practical reality. Key issues for the future include those that focus on

- **disadvantaged groups** (the extremely poor, ethnic minorities, asylum seekers, and disabled children)
- **optimal care for infants and the young child**, awareness and services needed to support exclusive breastfeeding for young mothers from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- **children's mental health** and addressing suicide among young people who as a group are clearly not getting the preventive help and support they need.
- ensuring **safe and supportive school environments** – dealing with bullying and creating safe environments, and involving children in the planning of these initiatives.

In sum, Western Europe has seen, and continues to see important progress for children, but critical challenges remain

EASTERN EUROPE, COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS), THE BALTIC REGION AND CENTRAL ASIA.

The situation of children in the Central and Eastern Europe, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and Baltic States region continues to be dominated by the impact of transition to a market economy and the opening of many countries to democratic systems and institutions. **Mr. Philip O'Brien**, UNICEF Regional Director for CEE, CIS and the Baltic States noted that progress in these areas has not been matched by progress for children. Achievements in terms of children's health and well being have been eroded, making this one of the few regions in the world to see a reversal of trends on a range of indicators. Preserving the earlier gains under new conditions poses one of the greatest challenges to the countries of this region - both in terms of channelling resources and of innovation and change.

Progress was registered in almost all countries of the region with respect to declines in infant and Under-5yr mortality but very few reached the goal of reducing mortality levels by half. In all cases, the countries with the highest initial rates showed the greatest declines. A second area of achievement has been, despite the crisis, maintaining a regional average of over 90% of polio vaccination. This should see the region soon declared polio-free (though the risk of wild poliovirus outbreaks remains). Similarly, with some exceptions, child immunisation levels have been maintained at very high levels. The decade has seen an important development in the growth of civil society organisations working in the social sector and democratic institutions strengthened.

Set against these gains, other developments have been less positive. There are only a few examples of countries increasing their pre-school enrolment rates. Most countries saw extensive closures of pre-school centres along with changing employment conditions for women. Tuberculosis is resurgent in the region with a worrying increase in resistance to current TB drugs. Estimates of HIV infections in the region exceed 700,000, with the region home to one of the fastest growing epidemics in the world and 80% of infected individuals under 30yrs old. While many HIV infections remain concentrated among injecting drug users, the number of heterosexual infections is rising steadily, an important signal of the future epidemic to come.

Anaemia is a leading preventable cause of morbidity amongst women and levels remain high. There has been a reversing of good practice on iodised salt with only 26% of salt iodised in the region – one of the lowest regional levels in the world. Young

people's health has improved in parts of the region, but in others has deteriorated with teenage pregnancies remaining high, and abortion rates, while declining, still very high in younger age groups.

The re-emergence of income poverty on a large scale underpins these reversals. Other transitions include the disturbing rise in inequality in a number of countries, population movements, environmental contamination and armed conflict. At the end of the decade, there were still more than a million children in residential public care.

Lessons from the decade include that achievements in service coverage that had been won earlier cannot be sustained without higher investment in the social sectors. There has been a rise in disparities across the region that reflects wider patterns of exclusion. These need to be addressed for further progress. New partnerships between government and other actors combined with disadvantaged communities themselves are also needed. Data on the situation of children is too often still partial and lacking in qualitative aspects important for policy making.
Immediate priorities for the region include.

- **universal salt iodisation,**
- revitalising of **pre-school** provisioning.
- **investing in health**, especially in **young people's health** and **preventing HIV**; and
- taking to scale **family based alternatives to institutionalisation** of children.

MAIN OUTCOMES OF THE CONFERENCE

THE BERLIN COMMITMENT

The first of two main outcomes was the adoption by the Conference of the **'Berlin Commitment'** that sets out principles and commitments for action by governments in a number of areas crucial for children and young people. The Commitment represents the collective view of all 52 countries in the Europe & Central Asia Region (except San Marino which did not participate) and was prepared through a detailed process of consultation sponsored by the hosts of the Conference. The Commitment outlines a set of commitments that reflect the diversity of the region but also represents Europe and Central Asia's major input into the Special Session. It also gives strong emphasis to the needs and potential of young people as a major priority for the region.

The Berlin Commitment for Children of Europe and Central Asia

Recognising that progress has been achieved during the past decade in fulfilling the rights of the child throughout Europe and Central Asia, in particular with regard to commitments taken at the 1990 World Summit for Children and the obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, universally ratified by countries of Europe and Central Asia,

Welcoming the important contribution of civil society, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, and regional and international organisations, especially the UN System, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the European Union and the Commonwealth of Independent States, to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child,

Also welcoming that children throughout Europe and Central Asia are increasingly acknowledged as subjects of human rights and that government strategies and legal frameworks, administrative policies and practices progressively respect the right of the child to participate in social life and to partake in the decision-making processes which affect their lives,

Bearing in mind our responsibility towards future generations, which implies, *inter alia*, that any action undertaken today, must not endanger the enjoyment by our children of their human rights,

Recognising that poverty and economic and social disparities, including growing income inequalities especially in the countries in transition, lack of opportunities for leisure and recreation and changes in family structures limit the chances of children of fully developing their personalities, mental and physical abilities, and of growing into a fulfilled adulthood,

Concerned that a growing number of children, particularly in the countries in transition are being deprived of their right to grow up in a healthy, safe and supportive family and community environment which results in growing numbers of children at risk of social exclusion, in significant increases in morbidity, stunting of growth and child development delay as a consequence of poor quality of care as well as in reduced numbers of children participating in basic education programmes and increased rates of juvenile delinquency, accidents and suicides,

Recognising that much still needs to be done to improve the health and social environment for children as well as the quality and relevance of educational programmes, and that low and/or declining public expenditure in the countries in transition caused by overall financial constraints and other factors, continues to affect the provision of social services for children and their access to quality education and health care,

Stressing the need to ensure support, including through giving consideration to restructuring national budgets, international aid flows, and appropriate foreign investments, for the implementation of social reforms and programmes aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of the child in the countries of Europe and Central Asia, particularly in the countries in transition,

Concerned at the rise in tuberculosis, malaria, sexually transmitted diseases, anaemia and iodine deficiency disorders in the countries in transition and noting with concern that HIV/AIDS continues to spread in many countries of Europe and Central Asia, greatly affecting those under 18 years of age and increasingly girls,

Aware of the negative impact of an increasing level of substance abuse, including alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs, on children's and young people's physical and mental health,

Also aware of the increasing numbers of children of Europe and Central Asia at risk of all forms of abuse and violence, such as corporal punishment, sexual and economic exploitation, the worst forms of child labour, trafficking and homelessness,

Concerned that armed conflicts and natural disasters continue to affect and destroy the lives of of children in Europe and Central Asia and in this regard stressing the need for a growing awareness of protecting children's rights in conflict situations as well as the importance of protecting children from environmental threats such as chemical contamination and nuclear pollution and of ensuring that children grow up and live in an environment that is conducive to the highest attainable level of health,

Aware of the fact that children belonging to minorities, internally displaced, refugee and migrant children, stateless children, children with disabilities and children infected with HIV and suffering from AIDS are at special risk of being victims of discrimination, and are in need of, and have the right to, special protection, inclusion and participation,

Taking note of the results of regional and sub-regional preparatory conferences and consultations, including the proposals submitted by young people and civil society organisations working for children's rights, and welcoming the Political Message from the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for communication to the Special Session,

Aiming to contribute in collaboration with the UN System, civil society and children themselves to the preparations for the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children and to further the development and implementation of actions for children in the next decade.

We, the participants of the Berlin Conference on Children in Europe and Central Asia (16-18 May 2001), affirm our commitment to the following:

1. Take all measures in order to ensure the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratify as soon as possible the two Optional Protocols to this Convention; develop comprehensive national strategies and provide the necessary resources for the implementation of the rights of the child; strengthen and make more effective the existing monitoring mechanisms; reinforce the essential monitoring role of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child by submitting detailed, reliable and timely reports;

2. Enable ratification and full implementation of ILO Convention No. 182 on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, ILO Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, the 1993 Hague Convention on Child Protection and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children;

3. Adjust legislation, where appropriate, to ensure its conformity with the norms of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and with the principle of the best interests of the child, strengthen governmental structures for children and independent children's rights commissioners, focal points for children and other mechanisms, while recognising and facilitating the important voluntary initiatives of civil society and the private sector for the benefit of children;

4. Encourage social and economic policies which meet the needs of families and their individual members, with particular attention to the care of children; ensure opportunities for family members to meet their social responsibilities and promote equal partnership between women and men in families, recognising the role of fathers; promote mutual respect, tolerance and co-operation within families and within society; fight against parental abductions and defend the right to personal contacts between parents and children across national boundaries; ensure that wherever possible children have the opportunity to be brought up in family settings in their own countries as opposed to institutions, and that national strategies for alternative care, including reform or closure of institutions that are not child-friendly be devised, where necessary;

5. Mainstream a gender perspective into all programmes and policies, promote equality between girls and boys, eliminate discrimination against girls in education, consider introducing study programmes on gender education;

6. Make every effort to support and facilitate the rights of children to participate in all relevant decision-making processes, in accordance with their age and maturity, ensure that their views are taken into consideration on all matters that affect them;

7. Make all possible efforts to eradicate poverty and address its negative impact on children, *inter alia* by reducing economic disparities;

8. Implement programmes to protect children from growing health risks, including tuberculosis, malaria, hepatitis and sexually transmitted diseases, in line with the targets set out in WHO Health 21; combat iodine deficiency conditions and anaemia; promote breastfeeding; undertake effective policies to promote mental health and to protect children from alcohol and drug abuse;

9. Pursue effective national and international information and risk-awareness programmes to fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic; adopt effective measures to prevent the direct transmission of HIV/AIDS from mother to child; provide special assistance to children orphaned by HIV/AIDS, and support the psycho-social care of children infected with HIV and suffering from AIDS;

10. Sustain and further increase access to free and compulsory good quality education for all children up to the minimum age for entering into employment while ensuring equal access, opportunities and inclusion for children from both urban and rural areas, children belonging to minorities, indigenous children, refugee and displaced children as well as children with disabilities and other children in need of special protection; empower children to use media and new technologies with competence;

11. Promote life skills education, health and hygiene education, as well as education and participation programmes that highlight peace, justice and tolerance;

12. Protect and remove children from all forms of work which can harm their health, safety and morals; elaborate and implement strategies for the effective elimination of child labour contrary to accepted international standards, bearing in mind that education is a key strategy for combating child labour;

13. Take all necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination and exclusion on the basis of race, language, religion , sex or any other reason; ensure re-integration of marginalised children, such as children living or working in the streets and children living in state institutions, especially those with poor quality of care; focus special attention on protection of and support for children with disabilities, ensure early detection of a child's disability and early intervention, and ensure that children with disabilities are accepted and integrated as equal members of society, with the same entitlements and with unimpeded access to basic health, education and other social services;

14. Take all necessary measures in order to end all forms of violence against children, such as sexual abuse and exploitation and corporal punishment; combat all violence in schools; protect children from violence and pornography in the media and on the Internet; end trafficking of children without criminalising child victims and ensure comprehensive rehabilitation and social re-integration of affected children; implement policies and rehabilitation programmes that take fully into account the rights and special needs of children affected by armed conflict, including refugee children, asylum-seeking and displaced children as well as those deprived of parental care;

15. Ensure that distinct juvenile justice systems are established and/or further developed which focus on rehabilitation and re-integration, using deprivation of liberty only as last resort and for the minimum possible period;

16. Recognise the importance of intergenerational justice, especially with regard to economic, and social welfare policy, and environmental sustainability;

17. Protect all children, irrespective of the social and economic conditions they live in from environmental threats; create child-respecting urban and rural environments which enable all children to have access to a range of play and informal learning opportunities both at home and within their local communities;

18. In the overall framework of national development plans and the 20/20 Initiative, ensure substantive budgetary allocation to the maximum extent of available resources, for the benefit of children and their parents and caretakers, to the health and education sectors and other social services, thereby giving priority to the eradication of poverty and social exclusion affecting children; and provide greater transparency in budget allocations and spending on children as a proportion of national budgets;

19. Call for the reaffirmation to strive to fulfil the yet to be attained, internationally agreed target of 0.7 percent of the gross national product of developed countries for overall official development assistance as soon as possible with the aim of increasing the flow of resources for the benefit of children;

20. Take all necessary measures to continue and expand international co-operation for children among countries of Europe and Central Asia and ensure support, including through giving consideration to restructuring national budgets, international aid flows, and appropriate foreign investments, for the implementation of social reforms and programmes aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of the child in the countries of Europe and Central Asia, particularly in the countries in transition,.

We have set a challenging and forward-looking agenda for ourselves, recognising that children are citizens in their own rights and that investing in their development is the key to building a peaceful and prosperous Europe and Central Asia. We must now take the legislative, administrative and other actions necessary to realise these aims, and to monitor progress and difficulties.

This will require commitments of time, energy and resources. We commit ourselves to meeting our obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and thus to ensuring that all children in Europe and Central Asia enjoy their rights. We will seek to engage all components of civil society in the challenges this task presents.

We pledge ourselves to this task and will work to create a Europe and Central Asia fit for children.

The second major output are the recommendations of the six working groups. The topics for the working groups were selected to reflect major themes of the Berlin Commitment. Each group was requested to explore the issue further, identify major concerns and make recommendations for action within the region.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

OPENING STATEMENTS

Mr. Joschka Fischer*, *Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany, opened the Conference with a welcome to all participants to Berlin. He gave a special welcome to young participants coming from and representing the Budapest meeting of Young People: it was their concerns that this Conference wanted to listen to and focus on. Mr. Fischer noted that while progress in the situation of children has taken place in many parts of the world, this does not imply that children are in fact 'protected'. Important deficits remain. Here in Europe, children and adolescents have borne the brunt of the deep-seated economic and social crisis that has taken place in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In the better off industrialised countries of Europe, the situation of many children is still far from satisfactory. In Germany, violence in the home, drug use, xenophobia and inequality of opportunity are major problems to be faced. Germany itself needs to become a 'child-friendly' country.

Mr. Fischer reminded participants that the purpose of the coming Special Session on Children at the UN General Assembly is to strengthen children's rights and make further progress on their realisation. This region has a special responsibility in this respect. As members of OSCE, all European and Central Asian countries have committed themselves to a human rights standard unique in the world. The region should, therefore, be in the vanguard, both in implementing child rights at home in our own countries, and campaigning energetically for child rights at the international level.

Recognising that improving children's conditions is a complex multi-dimensional task, Minister Fischer hoped that concrete goals for policy could be set out in the Conference. These should generate momentum for the negotiations in New York. He also reminded that sustainability needs to extend to all spheres of the discussions around children while intergenerational justice - dealing responsibly with the rights and resources of our descendants - should be a central theme in the debate.

Dr Zlatko Lagumdzija, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina joined Mr. Fischer in welcoming participants, noting that this gathering of countries from 'different, yet closely connected regions' offers an extraordinary opportunity to discuss the place and role that children and young people have in our respective societies. If a better world for our children is to be created, we have to put children and child rights at 'the top of our political agenda'. Dr Lagumdzija also underlined that, coming from a region dominated by 'transitions', these transitions will not be for the better unless the rights of all children are ensured and unless provision is made for children 'to grow up in peace and without fear.' Leadership in every country has an enormous responsibility to deal with the threats that are still strong today to children and young people. Many of the problems affecting children transcend the territory of an individual state and call for regional action and co-operation between states. He hoped that the Berlin Conference would offer guidance in this specific direction.

Dr Lagumdzija also reminded of the human reality behind statistics by relating the story of a father whose child had been hit by a sniper in Sarajevo. Interviewed by a journalist the father stressed that what he wanted most was not revenge but a world where his children could have a fair chance and where 'children's tears no longer need to be shed'. Dr Lagumdzija hoped that we could create a set of values for such a world.

Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Mrs. Christine Bergmann, underlined that children are not petitioners but rightholders - a perspective rarely adhered to in practice. One area of current debate in Germany is violence in the family. It is now agreed that violence is not an acceptable way of dealing with children, with Germany recently adopting laws that prevent the use of corporal punishment. Simply changing the law, though, is not enough. It needs to be backed up by a campaign creating a new image of parenting in society. Among the focal rights her government is currently working on is that of participation, with

children given the opportunity to shape their environment especially in schools, and providing feedback to governments on their views on how government should work.

Carol Bellamy UNICEF Executive Director drew attention to the fact that this was the first meeting that brings so many countries of Europe and Central Asia together around children. It was a meeting whose outcomes will help inform the agenda of the 21st century and an opportunity to, indeed, make the world 'fit for children'.

Ms Bellamy reminded that while there had been progress on the goals set in the World Summit for Children in 1990, many of those goals remain unachieved. There are still 10 million deaths occurring among infants each year; still 170 million malnourished children in the world; 110 million children out of school (of whom at least 60% are girls); 1 in ten children still grow up with a serious disability. Many children are still in child labour or caught up in armed conflict.

Deepening poverty and inequity, the ravages of HIV/AIDS, and declining trust in political structures increasingly compounds these problems. Here in Europe, there is a particular challenge of disparities, often linked with the need to address what are seemingly intractable problems of society, such as unemployment and exclusion. Children in peacetime have become a victim of violence becoming part of their everyday lives. HIV/AIDS remains a threat we cannot ignore.

At the same time, she reminded that the world stands at one of the most opportune moments for building an alliance for and around children. One of the most vital areas on which progress can be made is education. Ensuring that all children attend school and that the education they receive there is relevant and prepares them for life is a challenge that cuts across all countries. Young people, as witnessed by the presence in Berlin of delegates from the Budapest Meeting, are the future and there is a need to build on the Declaration that they prepared in Budapest. More resources are needed for children. It is clear that investing in such 'social capital' gives high returns to society, and that these investments also need to be sustained over the long term. And while it is important that donors too consolidate their support around such investments, in the final analysis, it is governments who must lead.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES FROM BUDAPEST

3 delegates, Zsuzsi Balai (Hungary), Claire Bradley (UK), and Mara Georgescu (Romania), selected amongst the 51 participants at the preparatory meeting of young people in Budapest[2] read from an 'open letter' prepared there on how young people today see Europe and Central Asia - a 'world created by you and experienced by us', and one 'far from our dreams'. They saw many families still living in poverty, where some children cannot afford to go to school. A world where people are not treated equally and their rights are not always respected. Where young people find themselves pushed to turn to drugs and alcohol and do not get the support they need. They see a world where education fails to prepare for later life; where public health services are not available for everyone, where our families are falling apart and where adults do not take us seriously.' What young people would like to see is a world where all young people....

- ...finish secondary school;
- ...have equal opportunities to develop their capacities;
- ...have access to information they need;
- ...can participate in political life and decisionmaking;
- ...are protected against exploitation and abuse; and
- ...have recreational places to go to that are safe.

What needs to be done? Young people invited adults to join in setting and achieving the following goals for the coming decade. By the year 2011, there should be, across the region ...

- 'shadow' Youth Councils in every local authority;
- educational reform to ensure greater relevance of curricula;
- a centre created in every city where young people from different backgrounds could meet and interact;
- services in every community for young people's physical and mental health that are non- judgemental;
- enhanced social support and 'mentoring' programmes for vulnerable families.

The young people from Budapest ended their open letter with a reminder that there is a need to start on this agenda, not tomorrow, but today.

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[2] 23-29th April 2001 Consultation 'Towards a Future Children's Agenda for Europe and Central Asia' organised by Save the Children, the European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe, and UNICEF.

FINDINGS OF THE YOUTH OPINION POLL

As the final part of the opening session, UNICEF shared the main findings of one of the largest and comprehensive opinion polls ever carried out on young people's lives and views and covering 35 countries in Europe and Central Asia. Focusing on different aspects of children's rights, the survey of 15,200 children between the age of 9-17yrs provides a detailed profile of views of young people on issues that range from access to information, attitudes to schooling, family life, experience of violence, their hopes and fears for the future, to participation in community life[3]. The sampling frame was designed to reflect views of 94 million children and young people across Europe. Some of the key findings are reassuring, others are disturbing:

- five out of 10 children polled say children from poor families and disabled children are treated unfairly in their societies compared to other children. (3 in 10 felt that children of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds are treated unfairly)
- 6 out of 10 children say they face violence or aggressive behaviour within their families (shouting and hitting)
- almost half the children polled feel they do not have the basic information on HIV/AIDS (65% in the 9-13 age group, 27% of 14-17 yr olds)
- only 3 in 10 children say they trust their governments
- 61% think their views are either not sufficiently taken into account or not considered at all by their local government

Young people also identified discrimination against poor children, disabled children and children of different religious and ethnic groups as among their preoccupations. Following the presentation of the poll results, a number of participants expressed strong interest to receive country specific findings of the poll so as to use the views expressed there for policy and programme design.

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[3] The poll was carried out by one of the largest polling companies in the world GfK Group and sponsored by UNICEF with support by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The main findings of the opinion poll are available in 'Young Voices- An Opinion Survey of Children and Young People in Europe and Central Asia' UNICEF/ODIHR/OSCE May 2001. The complete analysis of the poll results will be published in September 2001.

STATEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

The Bucharest Regional Consultation of Civil Society Organisations[4], addressed the issues that were also being discussed in Berlin, but from a perspective of civil society. The objectives of Bucharest were to provide a space for open dialogue among civil society organisations in the region, build consensus around key priorities for children and identify opportunities for strengthening the voice of civil society in favour of children. Their 'vision' document for the future identifies action that is needed at each stage of a 'lifecycle' approach that looks at the children from infancy through to their becoming young adults. Specific anti-discrimination measures will also be needed. Deep concern was also expressed at the results of system change that had taken place in many of the transition countries. There is a need for social policy and social sector reform that is based on a human development paradigm, 'which frees children from poverty and reduces unacceptably high levels of inequality'. Civil society organisations are a new force in the region, and one without which social change will not happen. Committing themselves strongly to create a 'child friendly' world in the region, the CSOs underlined there is also need for legislation and dialogue with governments to allow their participation to be most effective.

The statement on behalf of Western Europe NGOs and civil society organisations by **Mr Bill Bell** expressed the hope that the Berlin Conference would become part of a series of meetings to plan for the future of children in the region. He reminded that in Western Europe, we are living in one of the richest regions of the world, in countries all of which have ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Yet still one fifth of children live in poverty, violence is commonplace and growing, and there are major new threats for adolescents including substance abuse, and HIV/AIDS. Specific groups including the disabled, and Roma continue to suffer from discrimination. Children remain politically excluded from decision-making that affects their lives. There is still much work to be done to reform national legislation to reflect children as right-holders and monitor its implementation.

Examples of what can be done include: appointment of independent Ombudspersons for children; strengthening petitions procedures at the international level; greater use of child impact assessments to ensure the best interest of the child is adhered to; much better co-ordinated responses to children's needs; and govern-

[4] The Bucharest consultation was convened jointly by the Federation of Non Governmental Organisations Active in Child Protection (FONPC) and the NGO UNICEF Committee for Children in the CEE/CIS.

ments withdrawing all 'reservations' made on the CRC. Action to protect children is also needed at the regional and inter-governmental level across frontiers. The 'one request' of civil society organisations to the Berlin Conference, however, is that they should ensure that going into the UN General Assembly Special Session, the outcome document aims for the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and adopts a plan of action that reflects this. Anything less would, in their view, be a 'betrayal of all the work that has been done in the last 11 years'.

WORKING GROUP REPORTS

Six working groups were formed - each taking a theme from the Berlin Commitment Declaration - and charged with identifying major issues that need special attention in the region. Participants were given the freedom to join the working group closest to their interest. Each group was asked to make recommendations for action and identify next steps to be taken. The discussions were kept informal with recommendations coming from the group rather than necessarily engaging a particular country. The Chairperson of each Working Group (or the Rapporteur representing the chair) prepared a statement to the Plenary summarising major issues and recommendations.

Two of the working groups were whole day deliberations. The other four were half day sessions. Each started with short presentations by resource persons with the remaining time devoted to discussions. The following text is a shortened version of the Chairpersons statements also drawing on notes from the working group discussions[5].

Working Group 1:
Protection of Children from Discrimination, Exploitation and Violence

Chairperson – Ms. Lidija Topic (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Vice Chair and Rapporteur of the Bureau of the UN Special Session on Children

This working group examined the causes of, and identified measures to protect children from discrimination, exploitation and violence. Many issues and solutions

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[5] The full text of each working groups presentation can be seen on the web-site of the Berlin Conference: *http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/en/aussenpolitik/menschenrechte/kinder*

were felt to be common across the region. Children who are discriminated against, deprived of social services and opportunities for participation are at the same time those who are most vulnerable to exploitation and violence. And that, while there is progress in ensuring that the majority of children have access to basic services across the region, significant numbers of children are left without such access. A strategic framework to address these issues needs to be based around three overlapping functions. First, provision of services - where discrimination limits access and results in deprivation. Second, participation - with discrimination limiting participation and resulting in exclusion. Thirdly, protection -when it fails, the child or young person is exposed to exploitation and violence. Affirmative action is needed in each of these areas with interventions focusing on the parts of the social system that generate and reinforce such discrimination.

Factors that emerged as important in all three themes included the need for much more and better quality data on child protection across the board. There is also considerable potential to make greater use of (and strengthen implementation of) the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), individual ILO-Conventions and related human rights instruments. The role of civil society, participation of young people themselves and the media are crucially important with special attention needed to the mechanisms that facilitate their engagement.

On **social exclusion and deprivation**, protective legal frameworks are, to a large extent, already in place in the region. Constitutions of every country explicitly include the principle of non-discrimination. Practice, however, does not always follow the letter of the law and emphasis on implementation and monitoring of the non-discrimination principle is still not sufficient. Strategies to secure equality of opportunity and inclusion of all children throughout the lifecycle become vital. The main actors to prevent deprivation for children are the family – which has a direct duty to protect and provide for children - and the state - which has the obligation to enable and support the family to fulfil its duty. Strategies need to build capacities in both these areas. For action to be effective against discrimination, however, there is a need for adoption in each state of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and machinery. In some situations, trans-national action will be needed.

Exploitation and its manifestation in the worst forms of child labour and commercial sexual exploitation relate closely to deprivation and discrimination. It was of major concern that child labour is re-emerging in the region. Sexual exploitation is not new but has been a taboo issue, and is now growing with new technologies bringing new forms of abuse. Children particularly at risk are girls, child domestic

workers, children living in institutions and correction facilities, children in armed conflict, refugee and internally displaced children. Trafficking in children has increased across the region in the last decade.

The legal framework for action in all of these areas is strongly laid out in the CRC and in ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. These are backed up by the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, the recently adopted UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, and the European Social Charter. Implementation needs to be strongly at the national level with national plans of action backed up by collaborative international action. The OSCE action plan on trafficking and proposals by the Council of Europe on sexual exploitation and trafficking provide important models.

Violence was the third major topic taken up. A framework needs to protect children from different forms of violence – one that includes violence in the family, repressive action of state agencies and the violence arising directly or indirectly from armed conflict. Though these are very different forms of violence, they share the need for priority to prevention. The issue of violence in the home - hidden violence - is one that needs to be given much greater attention across the region. The common goal should be ***zero tolerance for all forms of abuse***, including corporal punishment in schools and in juvenile justice systems. Establishing this as a norm will allow children to know they are protected and know they have rights - itself an important form of protection. Inter-generational cycles, especially important in sexual abuse, need to be broken and addressed through laws, information, services and debate. It was recognised that having their integrity protected is the number one issue that children and young people themselves feel is important.

Many children in the region are living in war zones, find themselves in camps for refugees or displaced person, sometimes for many years and are subject to extreme risk of violence, sexual abuse and exploitation - especially children who are separated from their parents or care givers. A lesson from the region is that the first weeks of a complex emergency are often the most dangerous and characterised by high mortality and lack of protection. In such settings, it is vital that refugee camps maintain their civilian character. There is a particular need in this region to agree on the definition of unaccompanied / separated minors as this has major implications within countries on how and if older teenagers can access asylum and other protection measures. There is also urgent need to promote the entry

into force of the International Criminal Court Statute to ensure that amnesties are not granted for gross violation of children's rights.

Finally, as strategies against social exclusion and violence are developed, it needs to be recalled that children and young people are citizens and not merely objects to be protected. Children need to be equipped so they can protect themselves, by giving them all the information they need, ensuring they are listened to with respect, and when affected, given immediate and unconditional support.

Recommendations

On data

- Mechanisms for systematic data collection and research on child protection issues need to be established and maintained in a way that practical and relevant data inform legislative and policy measures;

Implementation and Reporting of International Conventions

- Monitoring and reporting mechanisms on child protection issues and child rights violations need to be strengthened at all levels. Reports to the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) Committee need to be used more systematically to evaluate compliance with the CRC.
- An annual report at country level on the status of children should be encouraged, including progress on incorporating the principles of the CRC in national legislation.

Social exclusion and deprivation

- active promotion of social policies to reduce poverty and inequality is needed through:
  - ❒ increased expenditure on social services; more equitable distribution of such expenditure; and mobilisation of community resources,
  - ❒ increased investment in children coming from marginalised and disadvantaged groups,
  - ❒ specific anti-poverty programmes, focusing on children and families at risk
- advocacy for the reform of child care systems to :
  - ❒ ensure the right of children to grow-up in a family environment
  - ❒ provide for a continuum of child-and family-centred, community-

based care services
  - ❒ transform residential institutions into care opportunities based on child rights,
- affirmative action to secure equality of opportunity and inclusion for all children throughout the life-cycle.

Exploitation

- all governments that have not yet done so should ratify ILO Convention no. 182 on the worst forms of child labour.
- All governments in the region should ratify the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography;
- Anti-poverty measures need to be linked with specific interventions to address child labour with special attention to ensuring compulsory education is affordable for all children.
- systematic attention should be given on the transition from school to work, improving the life and livelihood skills of adolescents. Advocacy for employers to reduce unacceptably high levels of youth unemployment and to end exploitation of young people in the labour market is also needed;
- a ***'National Declaration of zero tolerance for sexual abuse and exploitation of children'*** should be launched with national strategies developed to end sexual abuse and exploitation of children with specific time-bound goals agreed and set out.
- urgent development of tools and capacities needed for early detection/notification of signs of sexual abuse and exploitation of children and for assistance and protection of child victims.

Violence

- enactment of legislation that prohibits corporal punishment in any setting and establishes specific mechanisms to document and respond to children's grievances
- promotion of the standard of "child-and-youth friendly" social services that
  - ❒ are free from corporal punishment, violence and discrimination,
  - ❒ are responsive to the diversity of local communities, and
  - ❒ encourage children's active participation
- advocacy for the reform of juvenile justice systems, based on positive, non-custodial sentencing options, greater emphasis on prevention and rehabilitation, and on restorative justice measures.

- development of family-based alternatives to avoid long-term placement of children in any type of institution. Special attention is needed to children with disabilities to ensure that wherever possible they are not removed from their families.
- all governments should ratify the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict ,and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction.
- an effective international monitoring mechanism should be put in place to ensure systematic reporting on child rights abuses in all conflict-affected and conflict-prone countries.
- major investment is needed in quality education for war-affected children by national authorities. Education needs to become a priority within humanitarian assistance, during and post-conflict.
- Finally, children and youth issues need to be integrated into all peace and security agreements. Specialised child-rights training and codes of conduct should be made standard for all military, civilian and peacekeeping personnel

Working Group 2 :
Poverty, Transition and Development Approaches

Chairperson: Ambassador Hanns Heinrich Schumacher (Germany), Vice Chair of the Bureau of the UN Special Session on Children

The theme of this working group was considered to cut across all the other discussions in the Conference. It took as its starting point that 'chronic poverty remains the single greatest obstacle to meeting the needs and fulfilling the rights of children'[6]. Why was it not possible to come to grips with this outstanding problem not only in Europe but in the world? Governments have repeatedly committed themselves to reducing poverty, and as a consequence of their ratifying the Convention of the Rights of the Child, governments of every country in Europe and Central Asia are obliged to act on this issue. What were the obstacles to action? The working group concluded that each country represented at the conference 'could do better'. That the missing ingredient was not so much resources as 'an absence of vision, misplaced priorities, and insufficiently committed leaders'. But

[6] Mr Kofi Annan UN Secretary General in his opening speech to the Preparatory Conference to the UN Special Session on Children .

also that there was room for joint action. Child poverty need not be a feature of this region.

Discussing how to stimulate action, participants agreed on the need for a 'strategic alliance' to tackle child poverty, based on shared goals and concepts. Governments would be the main leaders of such an alliance but other actors including the private sector, NGOs and young people themselves need to be part of that alliance.

Child poverty has a multi-dimensional nature. As the recent DAC Report stated: 'the dimensions of poverty cover distinct aspects of human capabilities: economic (income, livelihood); human (health, literacy); political (empowerment, rights, a voice); socio-cultural (status, dignity) and protective (insecurity, risk, vulnerability). Mainstreaming gender is essential for reducing poverty in all its dimensions'. All this is true for adults, and even more so for children. For each of these dimensions, there is a need to identify what is amenable to action, what can be taken as targeted policy recommendations and set out how quickly we can expect change.

It was agreed that adopting a common standard for measuring child poverty – in ways recommended by EUROSTAT and used by the European Union - will help assess progress and facilitate co-ordinated action. The indicator of 'relative child poverty' – broadly speaking children living in families on less than half the average national income - is a measure that stands out as a clear indicator of national commitment to the well being of children and should be shared and commonly used by all countries of the region. Additional indicators and criteria to reflect minimum standards to be achieved for every child in each country should complement 'relative poverty' measurements. Indicators of absolute deprivation should also be monitored. Different countries may need to focus on different issues to reflect the varied dimensions of child poverty among countries.

Three 'C's were identified as applicable equally to national governments, the international community and other concerned actors:

> **Communication.** There is a need for greater information sharing and exchange of ideas on child poverty and particularly identifying examples of best practice. Why do some countries with similar levels of economic wealth have different levels of child poverty? What policies work in protecting children from poverty in different settings?

Co-ordination. Measures to address child poverty - and children's issues in general - are often undermined by the lack of clear lines of responsibility and by duplication of effort. The key factor was felt to be co-ordination of efforts. This needs a focus in its own right with effective mechanisms to support it.

Coherence. Ensuring that international and national approaches to child poverty are coherent, in terms of policies and legislative instruments, regardless of the economic or political situation, is essential. The 'best interests of the child' in terms of poverty alleviation and other children's issues should be the paramount consideration in times of economic slump, as well as boom, in 'bad times as well as good'.

Discussion of the role of different players- international agencies, national governments, communities and individuals, made it clear that when it comes to addressing child poverty' one size does not fit all'. Overarching principles that help include:

- First, that national governments should see action against child poverty as an integral part of good governance. Bringing social and economic policy together around such goals of child poverty is crucial for success.
- Secondly, that international solidarity was an important part of solutions. One major milestone would be the achievement of the UN target of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) of 0.7% of GNP. With only a few exceptions, donor countries are moving further away or are making no real progress towards this internationally agreed target. Participants expressed concern over the gap between rhetoric and action on this important issue.
- Thirdly, the full inclusion of other actors, including a private sector that is increasingly guided by the concept of corporate social responsibility, needs to become a reality. While not denying the overall responsibility of governments in protecting their youngest citizens against poverty, there is a need for broad based partnerships including poor children, young people, parents, families and communities.
- Fourthly, the full implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child would by its very nature preclude the persistence of child poverty. In this regard, participation of children in line with Article 12 is essential.

Participants were strongly of the view that the dialogue on child poverty initiated in the Conference should not stop on conclusion of the Conference. The World Bank

and the German National Committee for UNICEF kindly offered to facilitate a continuation of the process that was set in motion with young people in Budapest.

Recommendations

- that the indicator of 'relative poverty', as a key measure of national commitment to the well being of children, should be adopted as a standard for common use across the region
- that 'relative poverty' is complemented by additional indicators that would reflect minimum standards that are to be achieved for every child in the region
- that active consideration be given to a Joint Action Programme against Child Poverty in the region, that would have as 6 guiding principles, that it would:
  - set a target date for the elimination of Child Poverty in Europe
  - ensure that children in each country get a fair share from rising national income in times of economic growth, and enjoy special protection at times of income decline
  - promote good governance, non discriminatory practices and the most effective use of public and private resources for the development of children and young people.
  - show solidarity with children living in poorer countries
  - encourage the international exchange of information on progress towards and best practice in eliminating child poverty
  - create a broad coalition of international, community, voluntary and business organisations, the media and individuals, including children, young people and families, living in poverty to monitor publicise and carry out the programme
- the co-hosts of the Berlin Conference were requested to continue this dialogue with a view to elaborating such a Joint Programme.

Working Group 3 : Health and Social Environment

Chairperson: Ms. Aitkul Baigazievna Samakova, Minister, Government of Kazakhstan

This group examined key and emerging health issues for the region including HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, abuse of tobacco and alcohol, children with disabilities, mental health and malnutrition, as well as micronutrient deficiency, over-nutrition and eating disorders. While there are differences across the region, the Chair reminded that there are common problems, which can be solved by mutual efforts. These include the rising number of HIV infections (centering at the moment on injecting drug users but moving steadily into the general population); increases in Sexually Transmitted Infections; rising prevalence of tuberculosis in the CIS and Baltics region, smoking and drug use among young people; poor knowledge of reproductive health; and 'social orphanage' with children left without parent care in institutions.

The need to seriously address **young people's health** was a theme through much of the discussions of the working group. The outcome of the Budapest Consultation of young people has been a call for action by governments, NGOs and young people themselves to give priority to improve health services for young people. Governments need to ensure that services deal more effectively with the psychological as well as physiological needs of the age group. NGOs have a key role in providing information and catalysing social mobilisation. Young people themselves need to develop a strategy to influence the authorities to ensure respect for children's and young people's rights. Promotion of non-abusive ways of parent's interactions with children was also considered a major area for action. Much could be done through the many youth organisations that are already in place.

HIV/AIDS, even though the pattern of the epidemic differs importantly between the two regions, represents one of the major challenges for both Western Europe and Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltics and CIS countries. In Western Europe, HIV prevalence is stable but there is growing evidence that prevention efforts are faltering. The notion that HIV/AIDS is a now manageable problem has led to growing risk behaviour at the individual level and increased complacency at a societal level. Stigma and marginalisation of highly vulnerable groups continue. In the CEE, CIS and Baltic States, the three epidemics of injecting drug use, HIV and sexually transmitted infection are increasingly linked with all three epidemics occurring overwhelmingly in young people between 15 and 24 years. In addition, mother to child transmission of HIV will continue to grow, as more women become infected through injecting drug use or their sexual partners. Major challenges that were identified as facing the region include:

- the need to raise and sustain political attention to HIV from the highest levels;
- putting in place mechanisms for genuine multisectoral action and co-ordination at different levels;
- helping young people acquire life skills so they can protect themselves against HIV;
- raising the coverage of interventions among injecting drug users to levels that make an impact on the epidemic; and
- preparing for care through planning in each country for access to antiretrovirals and other drugs.

Each of these needs strategies suited to country settings. It was noted that the coming UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/Aids[7] will be giving special attention to the need to work with and involve young people - underlining the critical importance of creating a supportive environment for them. The rights of AIDS orphans to the same access to health and social services as other children should not be forgotten.

Protecting the rights of children and young people with regard to **alcohol and tobacco** is a challenge facing unusually powerful interests. Commercial enterprises are continuing to promote cigarettes and alcohol with a specific targeting of young people. With major new markets in the region and with very large budgets at their disposal, there is a conscious effort underway to simultaneously (a) buy a respectable image at governmental level; (b) create an even more attractive image for tobacco and alcohol among young people; and (c) silence opposition that is calling for anti-tobacco and anti alcohol campaigns. In developing strategies against abuse of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs these realities need to be taken into account. Educating young people on 'risks' is an important approach, but it can easily be 'undone' or overwhelmed by such powerful counter influences. The leading principle to guide such efforts should be to 'make the healthy choice, the easy choice'. If countries are serious about giving young people 'healthy choices', action is needed to :

- place a ban or severe limitations on the promotion of alcohol and tobacco
- put a ban or place severe limitations on the sponsoring of sports and cultural events by tobacco and alcohol companies

[7] The UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS is due to be held in New York in June 2001

- use taxation of alcohol and tobacco as a deterrent to the use of these hazardous products (and use the tax revenues from this to develop 'health promoting' alternatives)
- involve young people themselves in policies that affect them

With respect to **child and maternal health** in the region, many of the global challenges of the World Summit for Children remain relevant with both an 'unfinished agenda' of child survival and new challenges needing to be taken up. Key areas for action within existing efforts include (a) strengthening prevention and management of complications of childbirth, new born care and infectious disease; (b) the promotion of 'exclusive' breastfeeding along with appropriate complementary feeding and supporting this with the full implementation of the International Code for the Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes; (c) making sure that reduction of maternal mortality remains a high public priority and universal access to prevention and care services for women and girls; (d) ensuring adequate nutrition in children and adolescents (including prevention of obesity); and (e) putting into place comprehensive programmes to address the two predominant micronutrient deficiencies in the region (iodine deficiency and iron).

New and emerging health challenges for the region include:

- early child development
- domestic violence, child abuse and neglect
- addressing injuries and accidents, and risk behaviour associated with mortality/morbidity in later life
- creating an environment in childhood and adolescence that is supportive of prevention of tobacco, alcohol and drug use
- developing accessible and 'youth friendly' health services with a focus on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and as part of this, ensuring synergy between education and health sectors.

Recommendations

Young People

- Governments should make provision of improved health services for young people a priority. This needs to include laws, sensitisation and training of health workers and efforts to educate parents. As part of these efforts, Governments should cooperate closely with NGOs,

church and Young People.

HIV/AIDS

- reinforcement of prevention efforts in Western Europe for new generations of young men identifying themselves as 'gay' and to all injecting drug users;
- In East Europe, the Baltics, CIS and Central Asia, urgent efforts are needed to prevent large scale epidemics, especially among young people, through measures that
  - increase HIV prevention coverage of injecting drug users to at least 60%
  - strengthen prevention and care of sexually transmitted infections
  - develop comprehensive programmes for young people's health, development and protection
  - ntegrate prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMCT) into existing mother and child health services and prevention projects.
- All countries need to develop national, time-bound targets to achieve the internationally agreed HIV prevention goals for young people.

Alcohol, drugs and tobacco abuse

- actions are needed to support 'making the healthy choice the easy choice' among young people. This should include bans on, or severe restrictions of advertising and sponsorships of sports and cultural events by companies promoting alcohol and tobacco.
- support should be given to moves towards the establishment of a Framework Convention on Tobacco Control by WHO; and fully implementing the 'Declaration on Young People and Alcohol endorsed at the European Ministerial Conference on Young People and Alcohol in Stockholm .

Maternal and child health

- Countries should address the 'unfinished agenda' of child survival, and develop strategies towards strengthening of prevention and management of complications in childbirth, and new-born care. The promotion, protection and support of 'exclusive' breastfeeding and introduction of complementary feeding is an important allied goal
- strategies to promote maternal health should remain high public health priority of all governments
- comprehensive programmes to address the two predominant micronu-

trient deficiencies, Iodine Deficiency Disorders and Iron Deficiency need to be launched
- strategies developed to address new health challenges, especially those directed against injuries, accidents, and risk behaviour of children associated with causes of mortality/morbidity later in life
- for the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children, it was recommended that the draft outcome document should specifically include special care and support for disabled children and give reference to the ILO Convention 183 on Maternity Protection at work.

The Working Group also specifically recommended that regional, sub-regional and multi-country strategies be formulated to address the health problems of children and young people with collaborative actions proposed by Governments.

Working Group 4 :
Participation of Children and Young People

Chairperson: Ambassador Thomas Hammarberg (Sweden), Personal representative to UNGASS

Children throughout the world are systematically denied a voice in the decisions that affect them. Whether in the family, in school, in health care or in local and national policy making arenas, it is still too often the case that children's concerns and experiences are unheard or disregarded. This is as true in Europe and Central Asia as it is in other parts of the world. The aim of this working group was to explore how to translate the principle of Article 12 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, which guarantees the right to be heard, into concrete practice in all areas of children's lives. This will require not only legal reform but also fundamental change in cultural attitudes towards children.

40 participants spanning a wide range of governments and national and regional non-governmental organisations attended the working group. The organisation of the working group comprised three short introductory presentations, followed by a discussion on progress made. And lessons learned as well as problems encountered and strategies for the future.

The fundamental importance of children's participation was recognised as essential to the effective implementation of the CRC. Experience has shown that participation by children and young people leads to

- ❑ better decision making. Children have a body of experience and knowledge which is unique to their situation and which should be drawn on in the formulation of public policies which affect them
- ❑ strengthened commitment to and understanding of democracy. There is widespread evidence from across the region of young people's increasing disaffection with formal democratic processes. Investment in participatory structures which enable them to see the potential of participation for achieving positive change will enhance their belief in democracy
- ❑ better protection for children. If children are silenced and unheard in situations where their rights are being abused, it creates impunity for those abusers and denies children opportunities to challenge continued violation of their rights.

It was also agreed that the right to participate in decisions that affect oneself is a fundamental human right for all people including children.

Attention was drawn to the context of participation in transition countries in some of which there has been no tradition of civil society for adults let alone for children. Furthermore in societies which tended to be highly patriarchal and had no culture of recognising the children's right to be heard, the only public presence of children tended to be limited to decorative opportunities for politicians.

The discussion revealed that Article 12 of the CRC has begun to have some influence in most countries in the region, with initiatives taking place in schools, in media, and at the local and national level. These included the introduction of democratic structures in schools, projects that equip children with the tools to influence policy at local level, peer mediation schemes, gathering of children's opinions on what they see as priority issues with results fed to policy makers, consultations, the involvement of children and young people in the CRC reporting process. And media programming by and for children.

There was broad consensus on the key components necessary to achieve effective participation of children and young people:

- recognition that Article 12 applies to all children, whether they are very young, disabled, of ethnic minorities or from otherwise marginalised com-

munities. Efforts need to ensure that all these children can enjoy their right to participate;

- in order to participate, children must have access to information about the issue at hand, in a form that is accessible and appropriate to their age. This should also include information about the progress and outcomes of initiatives the children or young people have taken part in;
- more emphasis needs to be placed on creating opportunities for children and young people to initiate projects and processes which reflect their own identified priorities and create opportunities for them to develop their own ways of working;
- meaningful participation does take time, and adults need to be willing and available to give children time to organise effectively, consult amongst themselves, gain access to the information they need, and absorb information and develop their ideas;
- media can provide children and young people with a unique channel through which to articulate their concerns and interests and to challenge commonly held negative stereotypes of young people;
- parents and families are of enormous significance in children's lives and family life should be the starting point for fostering democratic relationships.

There was general recognition that whilst some progress has been made, there are many barriers to be overcome. The corollary of the right of children to participate is that adults have responsibilities to ensure realisation of that right. Strategies needed to implement article 12 include:

Recommendations

Governments need to:

- take appropriate steps to ensure that all schools introduce meaningful democratic decision-making structures enabling children to participate in all aspects of school life. For example in the development of school policies, curriculum and school rules
- establish national and local mechanisms through which children's views and concerns can be heard and taken seriously in the development of legislation and policy in consultation with children and young people themselves
- introduce training for all professionals working with children and in par-

ticular teachers and school administrators in the principles of the CRC, communication with children, and their right to be heard and taken seriously in all matters affecting them
- establish statutory, independent children's rights commissioners / ombudspersons to promote and protect children's rights, including through direct consultation and dialogue with children
- initiate research, evaluation, and dissemination of effective models of good practice, guidance and tool kits to facilitate children and young people's participation in decision making.

Working Group 5 :
Intergenerational Justice and Environmental Sustainability

Chairperson: Mr. Ivo Sieber, Chief of Environmental Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland

This working group addressed one of the most profound ethical issues of our day - the obligation of current generations to ensure that future as yet un-born generations can enjoy their rights as children to the same degree as children today. This was considered with particular reference to the environment where damage to ecosystems is already threatened irreparably.

The framework for the discussion was given by the work already undertaken on sustainability as part of Agenda 21 (and in follow up to the Rio-Conference) and the application of what intergenerational justice implies in practice. The idea of 'justice' between generations implies that we need to ensure the ability of our children and future generations to meet their needs and fulfil their rights to the same (and ideally a higher) degree as those of current generations. It implies, furthermore, that we should enhance rather than deplete the assets that our children and future generations will inherit. Key principles related to intergenerational justice, then, are 'conservation of options', 'quality' & 'access'.

The concept of sustainability relates to three inter-linked spheres: environmental, economic, and social. Of special concern to the Working Group was the environmental dimension of sustainability, which strongly influences all others. On the one hand, consumption of natural resources should only be at a rate that coming generations will still be able to use these resources (renewable) or adequate substitutes (non-renewable). On the other, environmental pollution needs to be

kept at levels where it does not accumulate in air, water or soil or irreversibly damage natural ecosystems or human health. Our influence on natural habitats, biological diversity and ecosystems should not degrade or damage them to the extent that our children will not be able to use or enjoy them.

The group agreed that issues of intergenerational justice associated with children have found limited reflection in the Convention on the Rights of the Child beyond the application of a universal 'best interest of the child' principle. At the same time there is now need for more commitment to addressing intergenerational issues especially in relation to environmental issues.

The discussion identified a number of issues of special concern to this region and to children. This included:

- the environmental disaster zones which warrant close monitoring for longer term intergenerational impacts (Chernobyl, Semipalatinsk, the Aral Sea, Danube, Balkan post-conflict areas);
- unsustainable patterns of production and consumption driven by short term profit gains;
- degraded environments that lead to difficulties in maintaining basic subsistence levels, migration, and in some settings, conflict;
- potential trends among the young towards an increasingly sedentary lifestyle that limits contact with natural environment and intergenerational empathy;
- erosion of social cohesion, and economic disparity also fuels tension between the claims of generations.

The group also expressed concern that the approach to intergenerational justice and environmental sustainability issues is too segmented and that the involvement of young people themselves in the debate on social and economic policies having an impact on intergenerational issues has been limited. Sensitisation of children and young people to environmental sustainability issues is limited by lack of appropriate educational tools and effective monitoring and dissemination mechanisms.

Recommendations

There is a need for:

- greater complementarity in applying principles enshrined in the CRC,

Agenda 21 and the Aarhus Convention

- a more child-centred, multi-disciplinary approach to environmental and intergenerational issues. This could be *inter alia* through the formation of expert panels
- longer term health impact studies are needed to establish the nature of risks of developments (environmental disasters etc) on future generations
- child impact assessments need to consider sustainability and intergenerational issues – issues that could also be taken up and reinforced by Children's Ombudspersons
- need to mobilise awareness so that the cost of today's economic activities to future generations is reflected in current pricing structures
- social support systems need to be restructured to provide more equitable sharing of cost burdens between present and future generations
- more investment is needed in youth socialisation services that promote greater interaction with both urban and rural ecosystems (World Scout Movement example)
- Strengthen international environmental compliance regimes, inter alia through extending time periods for liability
- The role of Children Ombudspersons in monitoring issues of intergenerational justice should be strengthened

Working Group 6 :
Education and Application of New Technologies

Chairperson: Mr. Tedo Isakadze, Deputy State Minister of Georgia

Group 6 framed its discussion around assessing education policies and identifying strategic actions consistent with the goals of 'Education for All'. It specifically aimed to highlight factors that limit access to education and non-discrimination; constraints to learning in conditions of poverty, crisis and instability; efforts to improve the quality of education; and the effective use of new technologies in education.

The group's discussion on the situation of education in Europe underlined the achievements made, e.g. progress towards providing compulsory and free education to every child, and universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A number of developments are of concern however. Most notable is the

emergence and persistence of poverty as a barrier to education throughout the continent. Negative trends during transition in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Commonwealth of Independent States in pre-school provision and other areas are threatening earlier gains. Limited access to information and information technology was also noted.

And while many indicators for educational provision are impressive in comparison with some other continents, they do not show disparities and tend to hide the real picture for marginalised groups. A review of social exclusion and the digital divide focused on barriers to education and provided a number of monitoring indicators from a childs' rights perspective. This included as examples, e.g. access of refugee children to education, access to pre-school programmes, teenage pregnancies and levels of functional literacy.

Young people presented their views on what they see as the major constraints in education in the region, as well as their proposals for overcoming them. They called for action to tackle difficulties faced primarily due to poverty, crisis and instability, the need to fight discrimination against disadvantaged groups and the need to improve the quality and relevance of education. The work of the group developed around two statements made by the young people's representatives: first that children and youth do not like going to school as they do not feel good there; and secondly that teachers are 'unmotivated' and 'unprofessional'. It was agreed that the goal for all education systems should be to aim at 'high quality', 'all inclusive' and 'responsive' education.

Several key issues were identified as critical for ensuring this:

- First, a commitment has to be made to maintain and increase the proportion of education budgets in all countries. Without this commitment translated into action, many of the goals set out for education will remain unrealised;
- Secondly, 'education' is much broader than schooling – learning happens in schools, communities and various non-formal settings. Responsibility should be shared between all these settings, (as well as due credit given). Collaboration should be put into effect wherever any of the main actors identified are not in a position to fulfil their obligations to children's rights;
- Thirdly, poverty and instability were identified as the main causes for numbers of children to have limited access to education - and often of unsatisfactory quality. These children often come from certain communities and

backgrounds (minorities, children with disabilities, street and working children, children in institutions, refugees, children affected by conflict, etc;

- Schools themselves are not in a position to solve all such problems. Functional communication needs to be established with health and social services to form an integrated approach;
- Lastly, almost all countries in Europe are faced with growing threats of expansion of drug and substance abuse, alcohol and tobacco abuse. The immense threat of the spread of HIV/AIDS is linked to these problems. Mental health and well-being of children and youth is strongly affected by the lifestyles prevailing in almost all societies, in the west as well as in the East. Schools need to collaborate with all government services aimed at improving the lives of children and provide the life and livelihood skills young people need to protect themselves.

It was emphasised that in almost all contexts, teacher education must be renewed in order, on the one hand, to attract the right kind of person and keep them in the education profession, and, on the other, to transform their role into facilitators of learning and mediators between learners and various sources of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Teachers need to be empowered to take part in decision-making processes in the school and community.

Finally new technologies needs to be seen as being more than computers; provision of equipment needs to be accompanied by adequate training and appropriate pedagogical software, in order to avoid use and sharing of inappropriate materials (leading in some cases to child abuse through the internet).

The discussions made evident the close inter-linkages between the different issues. Education systems cannot and should not try to solve the problems in isolation. All stakeholders in the education process, governments, local authorities, schools, communities, parents, other services, civil society & local activists, and most importantly children & young people themselves, need to take a responsible, co-ordinated & comprehensive approach to addressing different sets of issues.

Recommendations

Policy level action

- appropriate funding needs to be allocated to the education sector so

that the legal framework and operational support is given to all involved in the education process

- systems of collecting and analysing dis-aggregated data (to monitor: attendance rates and achievements among minorities, low income families / disadvantaged groups and communities, and children with disabilities, etc) need to be established and developed further

Improving 'Quality'

- the status of teachers needs to be improved as a central part of strategies needed to keep teachers in the profession and attract appropriately qualified new ones
- teaching methods applying child-centred, active and participative approaches need to be expanded. Curricula should provide space for individualised approach to children with different potentials, needs and abilities
- reform of national and school-based curricula needs full support to adequately address the new challenges to children, e.g. drug and substance abuse, smoking, alcohol, HIV/AIDS, as well as behaviours that negatively affect basic and continuing education (teenage pregnancies, inadequate work skills). These efforts need to be backed up by development of an integrated approach to addressing child-related issues through collaboration between the health, social and other sectors
- links and collaboration between the various parts of the formal system and representatives of civil society need to be established in order to fill the gaps in addressing the needs of the most disadvantaged children (Roma, children from impoverished communities)

Giving special attention to disadvantaged groups

- Children from minority groups, children with disabilities, children from poor families, slow learners, should represent the principal target for initiatives that
  - ensure full access for every child through collaboration with the most disadvantaged communities, and through work with parents coming from such backgrounds on the importance of education
  - promote collaboration with parents and students through their active involvement in the organisation of learning, and school life in general
  - individualise teaching and learning to make it responsive to the diversity of children' needs. Teachers' skills in child development and

information and communication technology need to be upgraded, and their role redefined introducing elements of a role normally attributed to youth workers

- provide financial support to poor families, especially with the aim of withdrawing school-aged children from the labour market and reintegrating them in school
- sensitise teachers on the family and cultural backgrounds of minority groups, so as to make them able to develop and apply strategies to compensate for lack of educational support in the family

Promoting Community Learning and Development

- schools should, wherever feasible, be transformed into community learning centres that address and respond to diverse community educational needs, and provide non-formal learning and training opportunities for adults
- early childhood care and development needs to be expanded through strategies that establish community- and home-based programmes

Introducing and Applying New Technologies

- resources need to be allocated for expansion of information communication opportunities in schools. These efforts can usefully be supported by promoting the use of user-friendly technology in public places (libraries, pharmacies, schools, etc.) to support parents´ education
- use of different technologies (TV, radio) in distance learning programmes needs to be expanded in order to decrease the rural / urban information and communication gap
- special attention needs to be devoted to closing the IT gender gap and increase girls' interest and involvement in information and communication programmes

SAY 'YES' FOR CHILDREN

In an evening reception hosted by the German National Committee for UNICEF, UNICEF Ambassador & Chess Champion **Anatoly Karpov** added his voice to the campaign '**Say Yes for Children**' where children, young people and adults are being asked to make a pledge to 10 actions all aimed at improving children's rights. Mr Karpov was quizzed by Young People from the Budapest Meeting on which of the ten action points was in his opinion the most important and why. He

picked HIV/AIDS as his number one point for action and prevention because of its devastating impact on young people. The young people themselves focused on consequences for children of war. The pop group ' Die Prinzen' added their voices to the campaign too, making the 'Lichthof' of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs resonate to some somewhat unaccustomed but appreciated sounds.

ADOPTION OF THE BERLIN COMMITMENT

On the final day of the Conference, chaired by the **Assistant Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Djelko Jerkic,** the Chairs of the Working Groups reported back to the Plenary.

Subsequently, the 52 participating States formally adopted the outcome document **„Berlin Commitment for Children of Europe and Central Asia"**.

On the occasion of the adoption of the Berlin Commitment, the head of the ***Polish Delegation, Ms. Katarzyna Mazela***, welcomed the opportunity that the Conference had provided to allow a rich exchange of experiences between countries. She specifically referred to the use, in the final text of the Berlin Commitment, of the term 'familes' in the plural. She expressed that Poland would have preferred to use the word 'family' in the singular, which, in the view of the Polish Delegation, is the terminology commonly used in UN fora. Changing this to a plural 'families' was a significant change and one the Polish delegation would have liked to see avoided.

CLOSING SESSION

The Closing Session was an opportunity for a series of statements by Personal Representatives of Heads of State and Government to the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Children, giving their reactions to the meeting and the messages they will be carrying to New York.

Dr h.c. Anke Fuchs, ***Vice President of Germany's Bundestag*** traced developments in Germany in follow-up to ratification of the CRC. This included changes in legislation to establish childcare as a right, and provisions that ban corporal punishment and discrimination against children. Participation of young people and children is a particular challenge Germany plans to take up. Dr Fuchs also noted a number of major issues that national governments need to take seriously: child

prostitution; the use of child soldiers; and the way economic conditions and trade affected children.

Mr. D. Vidovic, Minister of Welfare, Labour and Social Affairs of ***Croatia*** was the first of many subsequent speakers to compliment the hosts on the preparations and smooth functioning of the meeting. Mr Vidovic also reminded how large were many of the responsibilities being taken on if the Berlin Commitment is to be realised. As a small country, affected by war, Croatia was particularly aware of the need for global partnerships to face these demanding tasks. 'Alone we cannot do much, together, we can'

Other speakers included Minister Aitkul Baigasijewna of the ***Republic of Kazakhstan*** who described progress for children in her country on a number of fronts. She requested the inclusion in the Berlin Commitment text of wording to emphasize the need to include gender as well as violence against children in school syllabi. Minister Katrin Sachs from ***Estonia*** underscored the importance of access to information for children both through the internet and raising the quality of education. Mr David Aptsiari Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of ***Georgia,*** referred to the challenges that globalisation was bringing to his country. He particularly welcomed the focus on young people in the Conference. Professor Korac of ***Yugoslavia*** stressed his country's determination to build society 'with our children'. Despite profound economic problems and the priority to getting economic reforms underway, the country will be giving priority to reforming social sectors and make them fully meet the needs of young people.

Ms Mimoza Hafizi of ***Albania*** spoke of the continuing need to improve indicators for children as part of their National Strategy on Children and examples of youth participation in their country. Vice Premier of ***Moldova,*** Valerian Christea reaffirmed his country's commitment to children. He reminded that countries such as Moldova are going through a period of radical change and that women and children in particular need social protection during such periods. The specific situation of transition countries needs to be taken fully into account. And that as the Berlin Commitment is made we should also be assessing the financial envelope that needs to support it. Minister of Justice Suzanna Stanik of ***Ukraine*** described her government's effort to restore the health of children following the Chernobyl disaster, affecting more than 1 million children, and the challenge of making sure that such events do not happen again; Ms Katja Todorova of ***Bulgaria*** saw responding to children's needs as the challenge of the 21st century.

Ms Eeva Kuuskoski of ***Finland*** underlined the importance and possibility of mobilising new energies for children, especially in civil society and among parents. Issues of poverty and unemployment are at the heart of responding to women's and children's rights. She strongly recommended that co-operation between countries be strengthened through a range of networks and partnerships including among young people themselves. And if young people are our partners, we have also to let them change us. She also specifically suggested that establishment of national mechanisms for follow up should be included in the Special Session outcome document.

Ms Claire Kirschen of ***Belgium*** drew attention to the positive way that young people had participated in the Conference, showing the way that it can be done and that it was important to 'open such institutions' to children. She hoped that the process would not stop after the Conference, especially in deepening understanding of the issues outlined. The Berlin Commitment should above all not be allowed to become 'another piece of paper that is left in a drawer'. Madam Marie-Therese Hermange, of ***France*** reminded that the recommendations of the Conference will only bear fruit if they are inscribed within a wider process. One such was the effort underway in the European Parliament to elaborate a European Strategy for Childhood and to give children a charter of fundamental rights. Similar to the CRC, this charter will take material form in Europe. Toktosh Aitkeeva of the ***Kyrgyz Republic*** spoke of the economic difficulties being faced in the Republic and yet their initiatives in setting up a Youth Parliament. 'We are poor, but being poor forces us to be very active'. Mountainous areas across the world have special difficulties that are common and often forgotten. He noted that Berlin is only the beginning of 'an excellent process. Children are waiting for us to take it further'.

Mr André Roberfroid, ***UNICEF Deputy Executive Director for Programmes***, took up four major messages that he took as emerging strongly out of the Conference.

- First, was young people's participation. Not just as a word but illustrated at Budapest in the way young people can and need to be involved. This is not yet accepted around the world, and it is up to this region to carry the message – to the Special Session and to other fora - that young people do have a meaningful role in development and we as adults have a responsibility to facilitate this.
- Secondly, even though the region is often seen as rich in economic terms, there is no sense of, or room for, complacency. We are still far away from

the ambition of the Convention. There are problems of discrimination and of exclusion that need to be addressed. HIV/AIDS risks becoming a political disaster if decisive action is not taken now. There was clear recognition in the Conference that there is much to be done in the region on child protection. And that unless we address child poverty directly, many of the other problems will persist.

- Thirdly, was a question of solidarity. Unless collectively the more privileged better-off countries reach the target of 0.7% GDP for ODA, the condition of children throughout the world will not improve. This has often been said. The message, however, needs to be repeated many times indeed until this target is achieved.
- Fourthly, a final lesson that has emerged is that lasting results will not be achieved unless children become 'everyone's business'. The role of the private sector is particularly important as decisions made by economic players have a clear and growing impact on children. While able to contribute to the goals set out collectively, the private sector also has to be held accountable for decisions that negatively affect children.

Mr. Roberfroid noted that the Berlin Conference and its Declaration was a milestone for the Global Movement for Children in Europe and Central Asia. Along with it as a challenge comes a formidable opportunity to establish an environment in which creative responses around and with young people are possible, and lead to changes in attitudes at all levels. He thanked the Government of Germany on behalf of all participants, and on behalf of UNICEF, for its excellent hospitality and admirable organisation of the Conference.

The meeting was formally closed by the Chair, noting that many participant governments had expressed the wish that the important dialogue begun in Berlin should continue and had requested the Co-hosts of the Conference to facilitate such a process. He concluded, wishing everyone safe journey home from Berlin.

List of Participants

Delegations of participating States

1. ***The Republic of Albania***
   - Mimoza HAFIZI, Presidency of Republic, Pers. Representative to UNGASS
   - Sokol BUSHATI, Embassy of the Albanian Republic/Berlin
   - Suela HAXHIRAJ, University of Tirana

2. ***The Principality of Andorra***
   - Meritxell MATEU, Ambassador of the Principality of Andorra to Germany/Brussels
   - Rosa DA SILVA, Ministry of Health
   - Elisabet CARPA, Government of Andorra

3. ***The Republic of Armenia***
   - Varsenik BAGHDASSARIAN, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
   - Karine SARIBEKYAN, Ministry of Health

4. ***The Republic of Austria***
   - Dr. Georg MAUTNER-MARKHOF, Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs
   - Elisabeth CAMPESTRINI, Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs
   - Dr. Gudrun BERGER, UNICEF National Committee

5. ***The Republic of Azerbaijan***
   - Iskender ISKENDEROV, Deputy Minister for Education
   - Elmira T. SULEYMANOVA, Women and Development Center
   - Gedemsah SADIGOW, Ministry of Youth and Sport

6. ***The Republic of Belarus***
   - Stanislav OGURTSOV, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
   - Elena ZAVOROTNOVA, Council of Ministers
   - Stanislav BUBEN, Ministry of Education
   - Vladimir ORGEKHOVSKI

7. ***The Kingdom of Belgium***
   - Claire KIRSCHEN, Honorary Ambassador, Personal Representative to UNGASS (day 1 and 3) / Prof. Eugen VERHELLEN (day 2)
   - Nathalie T'SERCLAES, Senate – Working Group on Children
   - Anne-Marie DE KONINCK, Ministry of the French Community
   - Joost VAN HAELST, Ministry of the Flemish Community

8. ***The Republic of Bulgaria***
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   - Mila IONCHEVA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
   - Vellina TODOROVA, State Agency for Protection of Children
   - Nina KISSELKOVA, Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria/Berlin

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   - Romana KUZMAN OLUI, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
   - Marina AJDUKOVI, Council for Children
   - Aida SALIHAGI KADI, Union of Societies "Our Children" of Croatia

10. ***The Republic of Cyprus***
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    - Maria PAPAKYRIAKOU, Embassy of the Republic of Cyprus
    - Evangelos SAVVA, Embassy of the Republic of Cyprus

11. The Czech Republic

- Jaroslav MÜLLNER, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
- Jindrich FRYC, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
- Miloslav HUSEK, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
- Ivana GROLLOVA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

12. The Kingdom of Denmark

- Dorte CHORTSEN, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Peter OKKELS, Ministry of Social Affairs
- Bente INGVARSEN, National Council for Children
- Mette LARSEN, Danish Council of Youth Organisations of Disabled People

13. The Republic of Estonia

- Katrin SAKS, Minister of Population Affairs
- Marc AINSAAR, Ministry of Population Affairs
- Dr. Riina KIONKA, Embassy of the Republic of Estonia/Berlin
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14. The Republic of Finland

- Eeva KUUSKOSKI, Mannheimer League for Child Welfare, Personal Representative to UNGASS
- Pentti KOTOARO, UNICEF Finland
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15. The French Republic

- Marie-Thérèse HERMANGE, Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the European Parliament, Personal Representative to UNGASS
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- Annie DE CALAN, Ministry for Foreign Affairs
- Marie Caroline LAURENT, Assistent to M.-T. Hermange

16. Georgia

- Tedo ISAKADZE, Deputy State Minister, Chairperson of Working Group 6
- David APTSIAURI, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Personal Representative to UNGASS
- Ph.D. Ketevan NEMSADZE, "Claritas" (Child Healthy Nutrition Fund)
- Kakha KERESELIDZE, Committee on Juridical and Human Rights Issues, Children and Youth Parliament

17. The Hellenic Republic

- Joanna MANGANARA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Eugenia PATTA, Ministry of Health and Welfare
- M- GIANNOPOULOS, Ministry of Public Order
- Elsi TSIARPISNOM, Ministry of Education, General Secretariat for Youth
- Athina PANTAZI, Ministry of Education, General Secretariat for Youth

18. The Holy See

- Dominique MAMBERTI, Secretariat of State-Section for Relations with States
- James REINERT, Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations
- Angela SCHNEIDER, Archbishopric of Berlin
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19. ***The Republic of Hungary***
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- Dr. C.S. PAPP, Ministry of Youth and Sport
- Katalin BÚZÁS, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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21. ***Ireland***
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- Paul GILLIGAN, Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

22. ***The Italian Republic***
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23. ***The Republic of Kazakhstan***
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26. ***The Principality of Liechtenstein***
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- Caroline KONRAD, Youth Representative

27. ***The Republic of Lithuania***
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28. ***The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg***
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- Thierry WELTER, Ministry of Family, Social Solidarity and Youth
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29. ***The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia***
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30. ***The Republic of Malta***
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31. ***The Republic of Moldova***
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32. ***The Principality of Monaco***
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34. ***The Kingdom of Norway***
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- Vegard THISE, The Norwegian Youth Council

35. ***The Republic of Poland***
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- Irena KOWALSKA, idem

36. ***The Portugese Republic***
- Ambassador José Manuel DUARTE DE JESUS, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Personal Representative to UNGASS
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- Dr. João Maria CABRAL, Embassy of the Portugese Republic/Berlin

37. ***Romania***
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38. ***The Russian Federation***
- Galina PARSHENTSEVA, Deputy Minister for Labor and Social Development
- Zoya VORONTSOVA, State Duma of the Federal Assembly
- Alexander PANKIN, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ella PAMFILOVA, Coordination Council of NGO's Working for Children "Civil Society for Children of Russia"

39. ***The Slovak Republic***
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40. ***The Republic of Slovenia***
- Urša JESIH, Ministry for Labour, Family and Social Affairs
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41. ***The Kingdom of Spain***
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    - Anna Wrange, EU Coordinator

43. ***The Swiss Confederation***
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    - Barbara FONTANA, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
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44. ***The Republic of Tajikistan***
    - Nigina SHAROPOVA, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan

45. ***The Republic of Turkey***
    - Prof. Dr. Pll BULUT, General Directorate of Social Services and Child Protection Agency
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46. ***Turkmenistan***
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    - KNEKOTUN, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

48. ***The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland***
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    - Clive TUCKER, Department for Education and Employment

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50. ***The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia***
    - Prof. Nada KORAC, Minister, Yugoslav Commission for Cooperation with UNICEF, Personal Representative to UNGASS
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- Prof. Dr. Zlatko LAGUMDZIJA, Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Zeljko JERKIC, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Anesa KUNDUROVIC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ambassador Anton BALKOVIC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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2. Federal Republic of Germany

- Joschka FISCHER, Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Dr. Christine BERGMANN, Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women & Youth
- Dr. h.c. Anke FUCHS, Personal Representative to UNGASS, Vice-President of the Bundestag
- Gerd POPPE, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Dr. Günther ALTENBURG, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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- Tilman ENDERS, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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- Klaus HAUPT, Member of the German Parliament, Children's Commission of the German Parliament
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- Jörg TREMMEL, Stiftung für die Rechte zukünftiger Generationen (SRzG)

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- Lidija TOPIC, Chairperson of Working Group 1, Bosnia and Herzegovina

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- Diana NISTORESCU, Federation of NGOs Active in Child Protection, Romania
- Manana TURMANIDZE, Save the Children Georgia, Georgia
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- Ankie VANDEKERCKHOVE, European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC), Belgium
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Youth Representatives

- Eliza KANTERDZIC, Zdravo da ste, Bosnia and Herzegovina
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- Philippe HEFFINCK, Representative Turkey
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- Juan MERIN REIG, Spanish Committee for UNICEF
- Annette AALTO, Assistent to Executive Director, Swedish Committee f. UNICEF

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Wednesday, May 16

12.00 h – 17.00 h	**Plenary Session ("Weltsaal")** Chair: Dr. Günther Altenburg, German Federal Foreign Office, Director General for Global Issues, the United Nations, Human Rights & Humanitarian Aid
12.00 h – 12.45 h	**Opening Session, Statements by** • **German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joschka Fischer** • **Foreign Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Zlatko Lagumdzija** • **German Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women & Youth, Dr. Christine Bergmann** • **UNICEF Executive Director, Carol Bellamy** **Young People's Message from Budapest** **Launch of UNICEF "Young Voices" Opinion Poll** – UNICEF Regional Communication Officer, Regional Office for the CEE, CIS and the Baltic States, Robert Cohen –
14.00 h – 15.30 h	**"Towards an agenda for Western Europe"** **– UNICEF Regional Director for Europe, Stephen J. Woodhouse –** **"Towards an agenda for Central & Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States"** – UNICEF Regional Director for the CEE, CIS and the Baltic States, Philip D. O'Brien – **Main Findings of "Young Voices" Opinion Poll** – UNICEF Regional Communication Officer, Regional Office for the CEE, CIS and the Baltic States, Robert Cohen –
16.00 h – 16.30 h	**Open Letter from the Regional Civil Society Organisations' Consultation on Children in CEE/CIS, Baltic States & Turkey** **CSOs' Statement on Children in Western Europe** **Video Presentation: "From Budapest to Berlin"**
16.30 h – 17.00 h	**Information on Working Group Procedures**

20.00 h	***"Berliner Abend"* – Buffet-Reception & Opening of the Int. Poster Exhibition "Childhood is not Child's Play"** hosted by Fed. Gov. Commissioner for Human Rights Policy & Humanitarian Aid, Gerd Poppe, in the Atrium Reception Area "Lichthof"
Thursday, May 17	
9.00 h – 17.00 h	**Working Groups**
9.00 h – 12.30 h	**Working Groups 1, 2, 3, 4**
13.30 h – 17.00 h	**Working Groups 1, 2, 5, 6**
18.00 h – 20.00 h	***"Say Yes for Children"* - Reception** hosted by UNICEF, in the presence of Anatoly Karpov, and with entertainment by "Die Prinzen", in the Atrium Reception Area "Lichthof"
Friday, May 18	
9.00 h – 14.00 h	**Plenary Session ("Weltsaal")** Chair: eljko Jerkiæ, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Department of Multilateral Relations
9.00 h – 11.30 h	**Morning Session** **Presentation of Working Group Results** (working group chairpersons) **Discussion of Working Group Results** **Adoption of the "Berlin Commitment for Children of Europe and Central Asia"**
12.00 h – 14.00 h	**Closing Session, Statements by** • **Personal Representative of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, Dr. h.c. Anke Fuchs, Vice-President German Bundestag** • **Assistant Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Department of Multilateral Relations, eljko Jerkiæ** • **Ministers of participating States** • **Personal Representatives of Heads of State & Governments of participating States** • **Deputy Executive Director UNICEF, Mr. André Roberfroid**

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Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children

Letter dated 7 June 2001 from the Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Corrigendum

Page 1

The text of the letter *should read*

In preparation for the special session of the General Assembly on children, the Governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Germany hosted a regional conference which took place in Berlin from 16 to 18 May 2001. I have the honour to bring to your attention the report of the Conference on Children in Europe and Central Asia. It contains the Berlin Commitment for Children of Europe and Central Asia, which was adopted by the 52 participating countries, and the substantive outcome of the six working groups that met within the framework of the Conference.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and the report of the Berlin Conference (see annex) circulated as a document of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children at its third substantive session.

(*Signed*) Hanns Heinrich **Schumacher**
Ambassador
Deputy Permanent Representative

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